

# INVESTIGATOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

## National Park Service

All or some of the information provided may be available to the public

<b>Reporting Year:</b> 2005	<b>Park:</b> Shenandoah NP
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<b>Permit#:</b> SHEN-2005-SCI-0007	
<b>Park-assigned Study Id. #:</b> SHEN-00313	
<b>Project Title:</b> Understanding Visitors' Experiences of Old Rag, Shenandoah National Park	
<b>Permit Start Date:</b> May 16, 2005	<b>Permit Expiration Date</b> Jun 16, 2005
<b>Study Start Date:</b> May 16, 2005	<b>Study End Date</b> Jun 16, 2005
<b>Study Status:</b> Completed	
<b>Activity Type:</b> Research	
<b>Subject/Discipline:</b> Recreation / Aesthetics	
<b>Objectives:</b> The purpose of this study was to conduct a series of qualitative interviews with park visitors who hiked Old Rag to understand the meanings and significance they associated with their hiking experience. The study also investigated the extent to which alternative management actions designed to protect park resources influenced the quality of visitors' experiences. This study was primarily intended as a pre-test of qualitative interview procedures, and as an evaluation of the appropriateness and effectiveness of the interview questions.	
<b>Findings and Status:</b> Qualitative interviews were conducted May 21, 2005 at the Weakely Hollow parking area on the east side of Old Rag Mountain. The interviews were conducted with selected visitors after they have completed their hike of Old Rag. The respondent universe included all visitors who hike all or a portion of the Ridge Trail on the east side of Old Rag Mountain.  A total of nine visitors were contacted, 6 of which agreed to be interviewed, resulting in a 67% response rate. This response rate was lower than our expected response rate of 90%, which is common for visitor response to surveys in national parks. Lack of time was always cited as the reason for non-participation. Respondents were told that the survey would take approximately 20 minutes. Completed interviews range in duration from 13 to 20 minutes and averaged 17 minutes per interview.  An interview guide was used to direct the interviewer to ask specific questions regarding the visitor experience hiking Old Rag, the importance to the visitor of Old Rag to their experience in Shenandoah National Park, the extent to which visitors noticed visitor caused impacts, and the extent to which visitors noticed management actions which help keep visitors on the trail. Additionally, visitors were shown pictures of potential management actions/structures that could be used along the trail. Visitors were asked to evaluate the appropriateness of these actions/structures.  Results of the qualitative interviews indicated that the interview guide was useful to focus the interviews and that a conversational style improved the quality and flow of the interviews. Question wording was adjusted as needed after each interview to improve the information obtained and the flow of the next interview. In general, the interview procedures and interview guide were effective at eliciting information about visitor experiences and visitor preferences for management along the Ridge Trail to Old Rag.	

Aside from the effectiveness of the interview procedures, some responses to interview questions stood out and are worth noting. For example when asked about the importance of Old Rag in the visitorsâ perception of Shenandoah National Park common responses included themes like: its my favorite spot, itâs the best trail in the park, and enjoy the challenge of the rock scramble.

**For this study, were one or more specimens collected and removed from the park but not destroyed during analyses?**

No

**Funding provided this reporting year by NPS:**

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**Funding provided this reporting year by other sources:**

0

**Fill out the following ONLY IF the National Park Service supported this project in this reporting year by providing money to a university or college**

**Full name of college or university:**

n/a

**Annual funding provided by NPS to university or college this reporting year:**

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